

# Trump Tearing Up ‘All Politics is Local’ Rulebook to Sideline Democrats Talking Points

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**T**he phrase, “all politics is local”, is a common refrain in U.S. politics. The former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Democrat Tip O’Neill of Boston, is most closely associated with this idiom, which essentially means being always immersed at the community level, knowing your people, and understanding and solving their specific problems.

Like many other political norms, President Trump is turning this old-adage on its head as he frames all his talking points on a national level, so whether he is in South Dakota or Texas, the same set of soundbites get barked from the podium. This was most spectacularly pronounced this week when he declared in Houston – “Do you know what I am? I am a Nationalist!” – a phrase avoided by most of his predecessors due to its racist and anti-Semitic connotations.

This is ultimately where the battle lines of the 2018 mid-term elections are being drawn – you have Democratic candidates for the House of Representatives seeking to frame their individual campaigns in each of the 435 constituencies on local healthcare or education issues, and meanwhile the President with his bully pulpit megaphone is drowning out the echo-chambers of local talk-radio and cable television with such declarations of being a “proud” American Nationalist.

Lawmakers have returned home to their congressional districts in recent weeks for the final stretch of the campaign to discover, if they didn’t know already, that most voters were no longer paying much attention to core issues in their own communities. This is forcing senators and representatives to offer commentary locally on all the national controversy.

One of the President’s current favorite talking points is a Migrant Caravan of 7,000 Central Americans moving steadily north through Mexico towards the U.S. border – it has become political ammunition for Donald Trump, who calls it an “assault on our country”. He has even seized on right-wing media reports to suggest the migrant caravan could be infiltrated by ‘unknown Middle Easterners’ affiliated with ISIS.

These red-hot button issues are thrust into the path of regular Democratic candidates competing for election in constituencies far removed from the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border. They are compelled to address these sentiments of national sovereignty when all they want to discuss is the fact that the Republicans have destroyed Obamacare and in so doing, removed healthcare coverage from their constituencies.



The more Democrats are forced away from their key messages of wage growth, education and healthcare, to discuss the latest set of Make America Great Again headlines or tweets from Trump, the more the President’s Republican party gains in the polls.

And to the surprise of many pundits commentating from the sidelines, myself included, it shows rather shockingly poor political skills on the part of the Democratic Party that after three years of facing the same Trump playbook of America First talking points, they still have not developed a robust set of responses and all they continue to do is gasp in disbelief with hands thrown in the air as potential voters drift away. ■